

# **CABLE AND COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** 02/25/2010

**Location:** Executive Office Building, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room

**Committee Attendance:** Kelly Cameron, Alex Cohen, Trish Evans, Jose Zegarra Holder, Bing Kung, Treffaney Lowe, Mona Hall McKenzie, Grant Moy, Suzanne Weiss, Noreene Wells and Ben Wu **Absent:** Mark Berman and Jay Boyar. **PEG:** Melissa Pace. **Cable Office Staff:** Mitsuko Herrera and Keith Watkins.

### **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

- Review and approval of the agenda.
- Review and approval of meeting minutes.

### **PEG Presentation**

**Melissa Pace – Montgomery College**

- Melissa gave the committee a brief overview of the Montgomery College PEG budget request and discussed what the impact would be if Montgomery College were not funded. Montgomery College is only requesting a small reduction in our Operating Budget. Trish inquired about how much of the operations/budget is spent on training students for careers and career opportunities and what is the correlation between the curriculum, television production and funding? Melissa responded that she did not have an exact number at this time but Montgomery College does use curriculum television program students in about seventy five percent or more of all MC productions. Susan asked if Montgomery College had to take an addition hit in the budget what would be impacted? Melissa responded that to cut more than 14% would more than likely impact staff positions.
- Mitsuko gave the committee an overview of the budgets for MCT and MCPS. Suzanne proposed that the committee move the in depth budget discussion with full PEG participation to next month's meeting. Mitsuko asked that any budget related questions from committee members be sent to the Cable Office in advance of the April 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. Kelly put forth the motion to extend the budget discussion at the March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting and postpone the PEG field trips. The motion was approved. Budget discussion ensued.

### **Cable Office Report**

- Delegate Frick and Senator Forehand have introduced a bill which would require cable operators to offer for sale their converter box equipment that they presently lease. A hearing is scheduled for March 9<sup>th</sup> and the Cable Office is looking for consumers to testify. A packet of materials will be circulated to the committee. The purpose of this comparison was to weigh out the cost county residents pay monthly for cable equipment as opposed to them purchasing the equipment out right. There are some legal conversations taking place between the Attorney General office and the FCC Attorneys about whether we are preempted by federal law. Kelly made the suggestion that the committee testify. Mitsuko suggested testifying as individuals as opposed to testifying as a committee. Discussion ensued.
- Delegate Carr has opted not to introduce his bill. Instead he will work with the Cable Office to investigate other alternatives to expand the reach of MPT's digital broadcast signal.
- The County Executive will release his budget on Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. Mitsuko will make arrangements for presentation of the PEG budgets at a later date since Merlyn Reineke and Dick Lipsky could not be in attendance. Mitsuko shared with the committee some of the budget challenges facing Fibernet and the PEGs. One of these challenges will result in the consolidation and expansion of a 30 minute news cast which is taped once a week and will be collaboration between the four PEG channels.

## **Complaints**

- Keith provided the committee with an update on complaints. Of the many of the complaints received nineteen were storm related. Report distributed.
- Kelly addressed his concern about having to pay nineteen ninety five (\$19.95) charge for the Digital Transport Adapter (DTA). He also added that Comcast rate increases are being offered at a low rate package for eighty nine dollars (\$89.00) but when the bill is received the bill is actually higher. Trish suggested that we should encourage the public to call the retention office.
- Keith reminded the committee of the importance of requesting a receipt from any of the Cable providers when cable equipment is being returned.

## **Old Business**

- The committee discussed the two versions of the County Executive Presentation and exactly what should be discussed.

## **Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.
- Next committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Office Building (COB).

Submitted by: Andrea Gardner, Office Services Coordinator